United Nations A/C.1/60/PV.14

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

First Committee
14th meeting
Tuesday, 18 October 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Choi ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 85 to 105 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: This morning, before we being with our thematic discussion on the issue of disarmament machinery, I would like to give the floor to those delegations that were unable to introduce their draft resolutions and decisions yesterday, due to time constraints. I will then give the floor to those delegations that had wished to exercise their right of reply yesterday.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am honoured to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.58, "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", on behalf of the 64 delegations mentioned in that document, along with those that have swelled the ranks of the sponsors since last Wednesday.

As will be recalled, Argentina's initiative in submitting this draft resolution is part of the effort to restore the dialogue that occurred on this issue at the 2000, 2001 and 2003 substantive sessions of the Disarmament Commission. We can state with satisfaction today that such dialogue has occurred this year, beginning with the 24 January meeting at which the Under-Secretary for Foreign Policy of the Argentine Republic, Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, together with the then-Chairman of the Hemisphere Security Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Carmen Marina Gutiérrez of Nicaragua, and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Abe, discussed resolution 59/92 and OAS experience with confidence-building measures.

Subsequently, on the sidelines of the Biennial Meeting of States on small arms, we had a meeting where we pursued the dialogue on this issue, with a variety of presentations organized by Ambassador Basile Ikouebe, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, with regard to the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. In addition, experts from Slovenia and Germany spoke of the experience gained by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We also maintained contact with the other sponsors to jointly explore how to move forward with the implementation of resolution 59/92, and we took note of the fact that financial contributions had been made to set up the relevant database.

Draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.58, which my delegation is introducing today, reflects those developments and moves us closer to the objective of setting up an electronic database, storing information voluntarily submitted by States and assisting them, upon their request, in organizing workshops, seminars and the like.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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We thus deem it necessary for this initiative to be strengthened. In the future, we will consider the possible biennialization of such draft resolutions. Argentina is grateful for all the expressions of support and hopes that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure for me to submit, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the draft resolution entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East", document A/C.1/60/L.6. This draft resolution reflects the concern of countries in the region — and indeed, that of the international community — regarding the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and by the existence of nuclear facilities that are not subject to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This is a concern that has been expressed at successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The draft resolution emphasizes the need for all States concerned to take practical and urgent steps to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as well as the need for all States to become parties to the NPT and to comply with its provisions. The draft resolution calls upon Israel, as the only State in the region that has not yet become party to the NPT, to do so, and to place its nuclear facilities under the full-scope IAEA safeguards. In the draft resolution, the Assembly would request the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its next session on the implementation of these measures.

I should also like to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the region of the Middle East", document A/C.1/60/L.3. Once again, Egypt is submitting a draft resolution on this item, as we have done for more than 25 years. The draft resolution urges the parties concerned to take practical steps required for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the Middle East region, as well as to place all nuclear facilities in the region under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA.

The draft resolution also calls on all States in the region, pending the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or permit the stationing on their territories, or territories under their control, of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices.

We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as similar texts have been every year in the past. We further call on Member States to support draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.6, on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Mr. Prasad (India): I have the honour, on behalf of the sponsors, to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.53, entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament".

India first brought a draft resolution on this subject before the First Committee in 1989. Continued advances in information technology, advanced materials, biotechnology and space applications since then offer promising opportunities for the social and economic development of all countries. Access to these technologies is undoubtedly crucial for developing countries. This is recognized in several disarmament and arms control agreements, treaties and conventions.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the first multilateral disarmament agreement with a universal character eliminating a complete class of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), provides an example of a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory and legal mechanism that addresses proliferation concerns about transfers without impeding the economic interests of States parties.

The sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.53 want to make the Chemical Weapons Convention a model for other future agreements. India recognizes the dual-use character of many of the advances in science and technology. The potential for their use for both civilian and military applications is a legitimate cause for concern. However, discriminatory regimes deny developing countries access to these crucial technologies, even for peaceful developmental purposes.

The sponsors have consistently maintained that multilaterally negotiated and non-discriminatory agreements that are transparent and open to universal participation would be the best way to address proliferation concerns. The Non-Aligned Movement's Kuala Lumpur Summit Final Document, adopted in 2003, also supported this approach.

There is continuing need, more than ever before, to agree on an effective and transparent system of export control over technologies and materials that would achieve the objectives of non-proliferation in all its aspects, while at the same time ensuring access to these technologies for peaceful applications. This draft resolution encourages and supports such a process.

India, along with the other sponsors, hopes that this draft resolution will receive the widest possible support.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): I have the honour to introduce a number of draft resolutions and draft decisions on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for consideration by the Committee. The submission of these texts reflects our efforts to tackle very important and relevant issues, particularly given the current international situation, in which it is urgent to achieve the political will necessary to advance the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

Moreover, in accordance with paragraph 3 of resolution 59/95, on improving the effectiveness of methods of work of the First Committee, Member States are, inter alia, invited to consider the possibility of submitting draft decisions. In this spirit, at this year's session, the NAM is submitting two draft decisions, in addition to five draft resolutions, under cluster 6, "Other disarmament measures and international security", and cluster 7, "Disarmament machinery".

First, we are introducing draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.19, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace", under agenda item 89. Since the adoption of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, in 1971, the situation in the world, particularly in the Indian Ocean area, has undergone major changes. Today, in that region, a number of initiatives have been taken to bring about socio-economic development of the countries concerned on the basis of economic, technical and scientific cooperation. In this context, there is still ample room to develop measures to realize the objectives of the 1971 Declaration.

The second draft resolution we are introducing, under agenda item 97 (g), is contained in document A/C.1/60/L.15 and is entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control". NAM considers that the continued sustainability of the global environment is an issue of utmost importance, especially for succeeding generations. We should collectively endeavour to ensure that necessary measures are taken to preserve and protect the environment, especially in the formulation and implementation of agreements concerning disarmament and arms control. We call upon all Member States to ensure the application of scientific and technological processes in the framework of international security, disarmament and other related fields, without detriment to the environment or to its effective contribution to attaining sustainable development.

Our third draft resolution, submitted under agenda item 97 (h), and contained in document A/C.1/60/L.14, is entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation". NAM believes strongly in multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as the only sustainable way to address disarmament and international security issues. NAM also believes that it is critical for the General Assembly to adopt such a draft resolution to reflect its continued convictions regarding the role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. NAM underscores that multilateralism is the core principle of negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, with a view to maintaining and strengthening universal norms and enlarging their scope.

Fourthly, under agenda item 97 (i), we wish to introduce a draft decision entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", contained in document A/C.1/60/L.17. It is the understanding of the Movement that resolution 59/71, which was adopted without a vote last year, has given a new mandate to the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD IV) to hold an organizational session in order to set the dates for its substantive sessions. After having consulted the Secretariat, I can say that the organizational session of the Open-ended Working Group is tentatively scheduled to be held on 20 January 2006. In addition, three substantive sessions have also been scheduled, totalling 15 meetings; these are to be endorsed at the organizational session. The first session will take place from 3 to 7 April 2006; the second session will take

place from 29 May to 2 June 2006, and the third will take place from 19 to 23 June 2006.

By resolution 59/71, budget and services have been allocated for the holding of the Open-ended Working Group meetings for next year. The report of the Group will be submitted prior to the conclusion of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, at the latest in August 2006. In that regard, NAM encourages all Member States to work closely and constructively to fully utilize the forthcoming substantive sessions of the Open-ended Working Group mandated to consider the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV. NAM believes that the convening of SSOD IV can set the future course of action and a balanced approach to reach a new consensus in arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and related international security matters, including a comprehensive review of the disarmament machinery.

Fifthly, with regard to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/60/L.16 entitled "Relationship between disarmament and development", submitted under agenda item 97 (n), NAM believes that the symbiotic relationship between disarmament and development and the important role of security in that connection cannot be denied. NAM is concerned at increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on development, poverty eradication and elimination of diseases, in particular in the developing countries. NAM reiterates the importance of exercising restraint in military expenditure, so that human and financial resources thus saved can be used for ongoing efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In that connection, NAM welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development (A/59/119) and its reappraisal of this significant issue in the current international context.

Sixthly, concerning the draft resolution entitled "United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament", submitted under agenda item 98 (b) and contained in document A/C.1/60/L.18, NAM emphasizes that the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament have been instrumental in promoting understanding and cooperation among States in their respective regions in the fields of peace, disarmament and development. By this draft resolution, the General Assembly would continue its appeal to all Member States, as well as to international governmental and non-governmental organizations, to make voluntary contributions to the centres in order to strengthen, facilitate and implement their programmes and activities.

Lastly, I wish to introduce a draft decision entitled "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security", submitted under agenda item 105 and contained in document A/C.1/60/L.13. NAM reaffirms the importance of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security, adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 1970, which, inter alia, emphasizes the need for the United Nations to exert continuous efforts for the strengthening of international peace and security.

In conclusion, the Non-Aligned Movement hopes that all delegations will be able to join us in extending their support to the five draft resolutions and two draft decisions that my delegation has just introduced.

Mr. Rivasseau (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.39, entitled "Preventing the risk of radiological terrorism", on behalf of France and the other sponsors. The question of terrorism has become a major cause for concern within the multilateral disarmament community. In that connection, I would like to draw attention to our new draft resolution which is being submitted for the first time for adoption by the First Committee this year, concerning preventing the risk of radiological terrorism. Radiological terrorism is the threat of radioactive substances employed in civilian industry or medicine being used by terrorists to manufacture what are generally known as dirty bombs.

Strictly speaking, these are not weapons of mass destruction. For that reason, we are introducing this text under the cluster on international security. However, they are weapons of mass disruption. Why should we be spotlighting this subject? Quickly, here are some thoughts on that matter.

There is an genuine risk of radiological terrorism. Criminal groups have already succeeded in acquiring radioisotopes. In 1998, an attempt to use a dirty bomb was fortunately prevented. The consequences would be considerable, more in terms of panic than in numbers of victims. Time is required to reassure people and to decontaminate places that have been targeted. Used in a major city, either in the North or in the South, dirty bombs would make it possible for terrorists to

profoundly disrupt economic and social activity. Dirty bombs are easy to make. Radioisotopes are used in all kinds of equipment in medicine, oil prospecting, agriculture and university research. To the extent such equipment is not properly monitored, terrorists could easily get their hands on such material.

France is active in the realm of radioactive sources. We are convinced that they have a beneficial role to play in both economic and social development. But precisely because we take the view that the world needs those products in order to develop, we are also convinced that we must protect them from the terrorist threat and use them under circumstances assuring the greatest possible security.

Thus, in all forums where it is active, France has tried to draw the attention of its partners to the range of issues concerning nuclear terrorism: within the Group of Eight, the European Union and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna. We also hope to do so here in the General Assembly.

A number of consensus agreements have been adopted in this realm, and we believe that the First Committee can do a useful job by drawing attention to those texts and the measures in them and by encouraging all States to draw inspiration from them. We hope, through this draft resolution, to contribute to the ongoing endeavour being made through two other draft texts before the First Committee: Nigeria's draft resolution on prohibition of the dumping of radioactive waste (A/C.1/60/L.9), and India's on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (A/C.1/60/L.5).

We therefore sought to craft a text that is complementary to the other two draft resolutions without repeating them. Since Nigeria's draft resolution covers radioactive material that has been abandoned and its transport abroad, we are focusing here on materials and sources currently in use, and on action to be taken by States on their own territory.

By the same token, since the Indian draft resolution deals with fissile nuclear material being used to manufacture nuclear bombs, we decided to focus on other radioactive material.

We have also taken care to focus on consensus texts, in particular those formulated by the IAEA and those drafted in the universal context of the United Nations, such as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which encompasses non-fissile isotopes.

Furthermore, we were careful not to put forward ideas or language lacking consensus backing. This is thus a text with a clearly defined scope, but which we believe sends a message that will be useful for all States. Our wish is to build consensus on this text. We have already received suggestions from a number of countries, and we are going to work to take them into account.

We have also consulted with particular attention the States of the African Group, which is sponsoring the draft resolution on radioactive waste, and the delegation of India. In the days ahead, we expect to gather other ideas from delegations, further enhancing our draft resolution, in order to arrive at a consensus text.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who had asked yesterday to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to respond to remarks made yesterday by the representative of the United States. As every member delegation knows, the United States delegate yesterday made a provocative remark aimed against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as regards "non-compliance". The non-compliance referred to by the United States delegate is a vivid example of the selectivity and double standards pursued by the United States vis-à-vis nuclear issues. This is a United States political fabrication. It is a product of the hostile United States policy aimed at stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Non-existent non-compliance was used for political purposes to put pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is engaged in peaceful nuclear activities.

Let me take a moment to put some questions to the First Committee. Who made nuclear bombs first? Who used nuclear bombs first? Who continues to maintain a large nuclear arsenal and even spreads — I say, spreads — nuclear weapons outside its own borders? The answer is crystal clear: it is the United States.

Nonetheless, it talks loudly about non-proliferation and verification of selected countries.

What is the real purpose behind this? The real objective of the United States is to use its monopoly on nuclear weapons to dominate and dictate to others. It was none other than the United States that pursued us and pushed us systematically to acquire today's physical nuclear deterrence. The United States is the key country engaged in proliferation and should announce dismantlement of all its nuclear weapons within its borders and abroad, once and for all, before saying anything about non-proliferation. Then others will follow. The joint statement of the recent six-party talks clearly mentioned the obligation of the United States vis-à-vis the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

My delegation urges the United States to make a strategic and political decision to give up its deep-rooted, hostile policy and its nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to put that decision into action without further delay. Only then will the nuclear issue be resolved smoothly.

The Chairman: The Committee will now proceed with its thematic discussion on the subject of disarmament machinery. There is no guest speaker for today, and I shall therefore give the floor to members of the Committee who wish to make a statement on this subject.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): Disarmament machinery as it exists today is eminently suited to deal with matters of disarmament and international security. Political divisions are blocking forward movement on key issues. Current difficulties stem from relations between Member States, their priorities, preferred linkages between various issues and the prevalent security interests of States. The United Nations summit this year could not agree on language on disarmament and non-proliferation for inclusion in the outcome document (resolution 60/1), thus signalling the absence of consensus on these issues. The machinery and the "decalogue" fashioned by the first special session on disarmament do not seem to be holding well. Such a hiatus is bound to affect the working of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

The Conference on Disarmament is already going through a period of chronic impasse and the Disarmament Commission is in a state of paralysis. That leaves the First Committee. We must not forget that the General Assembly and the First Committee are political bodies representing sovereign States. If there is no direction at the strategic level, these bodies dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation issues are bound to suffer from varying degrees of inaction. When there is a serious deadlock at the political level, active delegations start wondering if there is something wrong with the procedures or the methods of work. First Committees Chairs are taking initiatives to rationalize the agenda and resolutions. Reform of the Committee methods, or the streamlining of the agenda or draft resolutions and their periodicity, must be based on a cogent, clearly stated mission statement.

The change we are seeking should be substantive, not cosmetic. The basic objective should be to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the First Committee. The question of the merger of draft resolutions or changing free-standing draft resolutions into omnibus texts should be left to the sponsors. If they do so voluntarily, well and good; otherwise they should be encouraged to make their draft resolutions sharper and more operative. Rationalization of the agenda should not be used to remove subjects of vital importance because some countries do not want to address them.

If the recommendations and resolutions presented year after year are not heeded, ways should be found to implement those resolutions more effectively. A resolution reflects aspirations of multiple sponsors and constituencies. When the simple device of a merger is used, the inherent thematic integrity of a draft resolution cannot be preserved unless sponsors have decided to rationalize the text through consultations. More rigour should go into implementing the resolutions than into looking at the size and shape of the paper.

Of course, delegations can try to refine the agenda and streamline draft resolutions. This requires a consultative process. Consultations can start during the First Committee sessions, but they will be more productive if they are undertaken during the intersessional period, either in New York or in Geneva.

It is increasingly difficult to justify a prolonged period of inactivity in the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference delegations act as a nucleus for other disarmament-related activities, but in the Conference itself, nothing much is happening. Despite this failure, it is important to ensure the continuity of the sole negotiating forum on disarmament. Three reasons come to mind: the Conference on Disarmament has

survived such periods of inactivity in the past, it still acts as a vehicle for exchange of views on security issues, and it is difficult to revive a forum once it has been partially or fully suspended. Exchanges of views are fine, but the Conference on Disarmament cannot hold town hall meetings. It is a negotiating, not a deliberative, forum. In order to fill the growing vacuum, all we can hope to do is to hold discussions that can create an enabling environment for negotiations and serve as a useful prelude. The differences on a programme of work are quintessentially political, not procedural. Six delegations this year gave what they called a wake-up call to the Conference. We understand their motivation and their disappointment. Our fear was that ad hoc parallel mechanisms could have hurt the Conference and disrupted the delicate balance between the four core issues.

The existing machinery includes treaty bodies, some of which are working fine. The International Atomic Energy Agency is strong and resilient. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has an impressive track record. There are institutional deficits in other weapons of mass destruction regimes, but conventional wisdom and empirical evidence suggest that multilateralism offers both longevity and legitimacy of such regimes. Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly observed in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) that exclusive or non-institutionalized forums will not have legitimacy in the long run.

If we want to work towards a new consensus to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation or to revalidate the existing agreements, the disarmament machinery can deliver, provided we decide to use it. A new security consensus should take into account the need to address existing and emerging challenges to international and regional security. We can pursue that goal through the Conference on Disarmament or through a special session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Landman (Netherlands): This year, the fundamental crisis in disarmament manifested itself across the broad spectrum of the disarmament machinery: no programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament; no programme of work in the United Nations Disarmament Commission; no final document of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and, most embarrassingly, no language at all on disarmament and non-proliferation in the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the recent world summit.

Most of us will agree it is not a flaw in the disarmament machinery itself that is the origin of the coma-like situation we are experiencing in disarmament. It is also not the oft-cited political will that is lacking. The quasi-unison statements and the virtual convergence on the subject in the general debate speak for themselves. The initiative by six States to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work is, in any case, a clear reflection of a profound malaise.

It is not the fault of the machinery. Rather, progress on disarmament is hampered by States' inability to reach a joint security analysis. Earlier this year, Secretary-General Annan put his finger on the spot, when he said that "Collective security today depends on accepting that the threats which each region of the world perceives as most urgent are in fact equally so for all" (*A/59/2005, para. 79*), and that "In a world of interconnected threats and challenges, it is in each country's self-interest that all of them are addressed effectively" (*para. 18*). The Netherlands fully agrees with that line of thinking.

The courageous cross-regional initiative by Brazil, Canada, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand and Sweden has indeed functioned as a wake-up call. For the Conference on Disarmament — which is entering its ninth year of stalemate on a simple programme of work — next year would be a most unwelcome jubilee of sorts if we do not succeed in having, at least, a meaningful and structured debate on the core issues at hand. We really do hope that the incoming Polish President of the Conference, together with the five Presidents that are to follow him, will enable us, through an agreed proposal, to get out of the present situation.

Clearly, our disarmament machinery can function when we want it to. It is not the machinery's fault that we are in the state we are in. That said, this does not free us from the obligation to explore ways of adapting that machinery, if we see a possibility to do so, which could help us to get out of the present impasse. Our forums must be optimally suited to effective discussions and negotiations. They must continue to allow for a balance between the sovereign rights and

security interests of all States and streamlined input from regional and cross-regional coalitions.

Moreover, the disarmament machinery cannot continue to function effectively without a modest further opening to the outside world. Here, I wish to refer to last year's report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817), chaired by former Brazilian President Cardoso. We see no reason for categorically excluding the Panel's recommendations as they relate to disarmament matters. The paralysis we are facing should be enough reason to take action.

For example, in the field of disarmament, as in other fields, the practice of holding interactive hearings between Member States and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives with the relevant and necessary expertise on the issue on the agenda could be instituted prior to major events. In addition, a strengthened engagement of parliamentarians in disarmament matters would be beneficial to bridging what the Cardoso report recognized as a democracy deficit at the international level. Of course, the establishment of a trust fund to increase the participation of representatives of NGOs from developing countries, as announced by the Secretary-General, is an important part of those measures.

If United Nations reform turns out to be possible except for the disarmament machinery, then there must be something wrong in the way we operate. Over the past two years, we have made a modest beginning in improving the effectiveness of the First Committee's methods of work. The seminar on that subject organized by the Netherlands two weeks ago showed that most of the work still needs to be done. One point that was consistently made in that debate was that First Committee reform should not be dealt with in a vacuum. We could not agree more. Constant attention is required to keep the whole disarmament machinery well oiled and up to date. Let me stress that the Netherlands is committed to contributing further to this important debate.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In recent years, the multilateral arms control and disarmament process has continued to find itself in a stalemate. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has failed to conduct substantive work for almost a decade. For two years now, the United Nations Disarmament Commission has failed to agree on an agenda. The 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) ended without substantive result. Finally, no consensus was reached on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation language for the outcome document of the 2005 United Nations summit (resolution 60/1).

Many countries are pondering the reasons for those negative developments. Many of them have asked what is wrong with the traditional multilateral arms control and disarmament process.

During the First Committee meetings last year, we had lively discussions on improving the Committee's working methods. Over the past year, in view of the difficulties besetting the traditional arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms, some countries came up with bold ideas for reform that they believe will be conducive to launching negotiations and achieving substantive work on important issues in this area. My delegation would like to share our views on these issues.

The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), held in 1978, established multilateral arms control and disarmament machinery within the United Nations framework: the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament were added to the First Committee.

For decades, important treaties and conventions, such as the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons have constituted the international legal framework of multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Multilateral organs closely related to those treaties, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as review mechanisms on the implementation of particular treaties, such as the NPT Review Conferences, have played important roles in the smooth implementation of these international legal instruments.

What needs to be emphasized is that, due to the authority and broad representativity of these traditional mechanisms, multilateral efforts conducted through them have never failed to receive the most extensive support from and participation by the international community. This is something that cannot be replaced by any other international mechanism.

Today, some countries have advocated that, in the face of the new international security situation, the international community and the relevant international mechanisms need to keep pace with the times, handle new issues and respond to new challenges. Many other countries have stressed the point that, since the agenda and objectives set forth by the first special session on disarmament (SSOD I) have yet to be fulfilled, they are not out of date and require continued efforts.

We believe that both arguments are credible. They reflect different aspects of reality. They should therefore be viewed as complementary rather than as mutually exclusive. Likewise, it is necessary to attain coherence in a wide spectrum of efforts on international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and on addressing humanitarian concerns.

While advancing the traditional disarmament goals, it is important to seek new opportunities and respond to new challenges, thus comprehensively consolidating, strengthening and improving the current international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation machinery, which is pivotal for maintaining world peace, security and stability.

To promote the fair, rational, comprehensive and sound development of the international cause of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, the international community should follow the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized norms governing international relations. It should foster a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, enhance mutual trust through dialogue and promote common security through cooperation.

The right of all countries to equal participation in international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation affairs should be guaranteed, and the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process should be promoted on the basis that the security of no country should be diminished.

Secondly, it is of vital importance to give full play to the role of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions. It is essential to respect the authority of the traditional multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation machinery and make full use of existing traditional mechanisms. It is on that premise that parties must discuss how to improve the efficiency of the relevant machinery.

Thirdly, it needs to be emphasized that political will is a precondition for diplomatic efforts. Multilateral diplomacy is no exception. Universal participation is the key to ensuring successful multilateral efforts. The multilateral process should be inclusive, not exclusive. Only by including all stakeholders will it be possible for parties to reach multilateral agreements that are genuinely universal and effective. It is thus necessary to continue to adhere to the principle of consensus in all substantive negotiations on international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This will guarantee the fairness, equality, rationality and universality of international arrangements.

Fourthly, major reform of the traditional multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation machinery needs to be realized through the convening of a fourth special session on disarmament. Only SSOD IV and its preparatory process can provide Member States with opportunities to fully and substantively air their views on all issues related to reform and to reach a new consensus on the adjustment of multilateral mechanisms. It does not matter if consensus among all the parties cannot be reached quickly. The international discussion itself is a process for creating conditions for consensus. What is important is that all parties attach great importance to and fully use this process and make tireless efforts towards the goals I have described.

The Chinese delegation will continue to follow and take an active part in the multilateral discussions on these matters, and we will exert unswerving efforts to safeguard the traditional multilateral mechanisms within the United Nations system, to accelerate the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process and to maintain world peace, security and stability.

Ms. Borsiin Bonnier (Sweden): It is a pleasure to take the floor under your chairmanship, Sir.

The rule of law is a fundamental principle in domestic affairs. The fact that some citizens might break the law does not make the law less important. The same goes for international affairs. The disarmament machinery has played a fundamental role in producing vital pieces of international law, and it has created mechanisms to monitor treaties and norms to ensure that they are being upheld. But lacunae remain both on the legal side and on the implementation side.

The disarmament machinery should be mobilized to fill those gaps.

It is disturbing to sometimes see a reluctance to be bound by international norms and agreements freely entered into and an unwillingness to enter into new binding agreements. This is particularly disturbing at a time when globalization makes weapons and weapon technologies more and more accessible and security problems more and more interconnected globally. Rejecting the use of the disarmament machinery to develop necessary rules and norms and to strengthen verification and compliance carries significant risks for the security of us all.

We need focused and concerted efforts to operationalize and implement existing commitments. Key words are compliance, implementation and verification. We need to feel confident that treaties and agreements entered into are not discarded. The recently concluded Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a case in point. And year after year the General Assembly adopts resolutions that are not implemented. Also, year after year, key disarmament issues are put on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament which is not adopted.

So we must ask ourselves what can be done to hold States accountable for non-implementation and for the present inertia in the disarmament machinery. Representatives of civil society clearly also have a role to play here.

Some say that the disarmament agenda is outdated and that we should bring in new issues. Perceptions, threats and challenges obviously change over time, and they will continue to do so. But the emergence of new dangers does not lighten the burden of dealing with the old ones, and addressing the old ones is no reason not to face up to the new ones.

The present debate on old versus new threats is, to my mind, a false debate, and the effect has largely been that neither is dealt with. Instead of fruitless debates in which some agenda priorities are pitched against others, we should open our minds — and the agendas — to all global security concerns, be they old or new.

It is a common phenomenon that when diplomats and bureaucrats fail on the substance, blame is put on the machinery and its procedures. We must not fall into that trap. The main difficulty is not the machinery itself. Actually, the machinery is nothing other than us. Of course we can always do some sound housekeeping to make it smoother and more effective. But the key problem is our inability to fully utilize the potential of all its parts. That goes for the General Assembly and its First Committee; it goes for the Disarmament Commission and for the Conference on Disarmament; and it goes for the various review processes connected to the body of international treaties.

We could also be a lot more flexible in utilizing the interrelationship and possible interaction between the various parts of the machinery and between different United Nations forums. That could take different forms. The handling of the issue of the weaponization of outer space, for example, would benefit from a better understanding of the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Also, the potentials of the mechanisms and capabilities at the disposal of the Secretary-General and the Security Council could be far more systematically explored.

Those overriding aspects not withstanding, I believe that we need to reassess the way we work — our modus operandi — not as a substitute for substance but because some of the working modes from the cold war period have become counterproductive.

The present geographical groupings were established for election purposes. They still serve that purpose reasonably well. But during the cold war they were also used for position-taking in negotiating processes. Today, like-minded States and common interests are found in all groupings. The time has come for working much closer together across the geographical groupings. The New Agenda Coalition is one example. Recently, seven nations joined together to try to rally support for the inclusion of non-proliferation and disarmament in the summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). I believe that we will see more intercontinental groupings like those in the future, because they are needed.

A few weeks ago, here in the First Committee, another six countries, my own among them, took an initiative to try to break the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. The simple idea was to use a well established mechanism of the General Assembly and unused funds allocated to the Conference to get some

work done until such a date when the Conference agrees on a programme of work. The time was not ripe and the idea was too unconventional for some. For the time being, it will be kept on the back burner while, hopefully, other creative alternatives will emerge while the Conference on Disarmament is given a ninth year to find an effective way forward.

We also need to reflect on how consensus rules are being applied. Is it reasonable that procedural vetoes can be systematically and routinely put into play to prevent substantive discussions from even beginning? For three out of four weeks, the NPT Review Conference was effectively blocked that way. For eight years, the Conference on Disarmament has similarly been stymied. Consensus requirements on substance, once the discussions or negotiations are under way, are quite another matter. The right to say no is absolutely legitimate and essential when national security matters are at stake, not the least for smaller nations outside defence alliances.

In conclusion, much could and should be done to make the disarmament machinery more effective. But in order to get out of the present stalemate and to meet the security challenges in an era of galloping globalization, we all need to approach our common multilateral system with an attitude of cooperation and compromise, of give and take, rather than of confrontations based on all or nothing, my way or no way. Business as usual — meaning no business at all — is simply not an option.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): The first rule of a good machine is that it performs well its intended task. Against that standard we have to acknowledge that the United Nations disarmament machinery is failing and is in need of an overhaul. For many, that was highlighted by the absence in the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of last month's United Nations summit of any reference to non-proliferation and disarmament matters. The current session of the First Committee provides an opportunity to discuss renewal of our global disarmament machinery.

Two key multilateral disarmament bodies, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, are currently not functioning as intended. The former has been unable to agree upon a programme of work, the latter on an agenda. Neither have in recent years undertaken the substantive work for which they are mandated and resourced.

The First Committee is also less effective than it could be, notwithstanding ongoing efforts to enhance the value of its work. Canada, like many other States, would like to see effective multilateralism being practised by the United Nations organs associated with disarmament matters, and in that light we need to promote a far better level of productivity than is currently the case.

The Conference on Disarmament, established in 1979 as a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, is a vital mechanism for advancing the multilateral disarmament agenda. The Conference's failure to adopt a programme of work has not only inhibited the international community from advancing collective efforts to respond to serious threats to global peace and security but has also contributed to the current crisis of confidence in the multilateral non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament arena.

Like the Disarmament Commission, the Conference is blocked by differences of national priorities that, unresolved, make agreement on a comprehensive programme of work impossible. Whether one prefers to speak of linkage or respect for the concerns of others, it has long been evident that in that consensus-based body, an adoption of a programme of work will require action on the following four issues: a fissile material cut-off treaty, nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances.

Canada is concerned about the negative implications for our own security, as well as for general security, of the Conference's nearly eight-year deadlock in agreeing on a programme of work. Owing to the importance of the Conference's priority issues, unless it is able to embark on substantive work soon, we must retain the option of taking up its subject matter elsewhere. While we remain very much committed to a Conference on Disarmament that is fulfilling its responsibilities, we will not resign ourselves to a dysfunctional Conference on Disarmament. I would refer colleagues to the statement in this regard made by my Foreign Minister to the Conference on Disarmament in March of this year (see CD/PV.978).

We have also taken note of the intentions of the next three Conference on Disarmament Presidents for 2006 to pursue an initiative aimed at commencing a structured discussion of core issues within the Conference that would be sustained throughout the year. We look forward to working with the representatives of Poland, the Republic of Korea and Romania and the other Presidents to advance their useful ideas, and we offer them our full support. We intend to work positively with all members of the Conference on Disarmament to realize our common objective of an effective and relevant Conference on Disarmament.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission, created in June 1978 by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament, has shown the potential, over the years, to formulate consensus principles, guidelines and recommendations on a large number of subjects. When that deliberative body is able to work, its treatment of various problems in the field of disarmament can serve to guide multilateral efforts towards enhanced cooperation and more effective action.

However, the potential value of that body has been lost in recent years, as its members have been unable or unwilling to reach agreement on an agenda. While awaiting agreement on a formal agenda, which we hope will soon be forthcoming, we wonder if the Disarmament Commission could not take up the file of the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), on which a decade-long debate has failed to produce a common stance. In order to facilitate an eventual agreement on the convening of this fourth special session, it could be useful for the Disarmament Commission to take stock of what has been achieved and what remains to be done in realizing the goals set out by SSOD I, in 1978, and whether those goals might be revised.

The sixtieth session of the First Committee, on disarmament and international security, provides a timely opportunity to address the current crisis besetting our shared non-proliferation and disarmament regime. As the universal body dealing with non-proliferation and disarmament matters, the First Committee enables States not members of the Conference on Disarmament or of other restricted bodies to voice their views about the international security agenda.

We think it is desirable that the First Committee continue to give democratic expression to the hopes and expectations of the United Nations membership insofar as disarmament and international security are concerned. We are encouraged by the progress to date in utilizing this more political function of the First Committee and hope it will continue to be developed in the future.

Mr. Rapacki (Poland): As I am taking the floor for the first time during this session of the First Committee, please allow me, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate you on your election to your high office. My pleasure is even greater as Poland and the Republic of Korea are close partners on many important issues, including disarmament and non-proliferation.

The topic of today's thematic debate, disarmament machinery, is of very great interest to my delegation. Poland has traditionally been involved in the international community's efforts aimed at strengthening the disarmament machinery. My country is a State party to all disarmament treaties. Last year we announced that we would join the Mine Ban Treaty. We are party to all export control regimes. We are actively involved in developing new tools in non-proliferation and disarmament. The Proliferation Security Initiative, known as the Krakow Initiative, and the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction are two excellent examples of our commitment to the goal of strengthening the disarmament machinery.

Having said that, let me reiterate that Poland has a very keen interest in the effective functioning of the United Nations disarmament machinery. We recognize that the disarmament machinery finds itself in a difficult situation. The inability of the Disarmament Commission to adopt its agenda and the lack of a programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament are most evident examples. Failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to agree on a final document earlier this year and the omission of non-proliferation and disarmament from the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the United Nations summit in September further exacerbate the worrisome picture. All those negative developments within the machinery do not contribute to resolving the complex challenges in non-proliferation and disarmament.

Therefore, we should not give up our efforts in increasing the effectiveness of the machinery which is at our disposal, by bringing certain bodies back to work on substantive issues. It was for this exact reason that the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, proposed that the Secretary-General establish a group of sages, which would work on comprehensive ways of generating political will and make it possible to break the stalemate in such important bodies as the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

We need effectively functioning disarmament machinery. That is why Poland supported last year's efforts to improve the method of work of the First Committee. Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico, Chairman of the Committee at that time, has proven that we can find ways to revitalize the work of the machinery. Let me stress that, at this point, the ultimate success of revitalization efforts lies in the hands of delegations. It is up to us to make real efforts towards streamlining the work of the First Committee. It is also up to Member States to implement resolutions adopted on the Committee's recommendation.

On 1 January 2006, Poland will take over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Together with all of next year's Presidents — the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Slovakia — we have engaged in discussions on how to advance the work of the Conference throughout the 2006 session. We believe that the establishment of a common platform of cooperation between the session's Presidents can advance us closer towards long-awaited progress on substantive issues.

As is widely recognized, the problems of the Conference are of a political nature and can be overcome only by political decisions developed in capitals. It is my delegation's view that we should concentrate on discussing substantive issues. Only such discussion can bring us closer to understanding which topics are ready for negotiation. We will count on, and we look forward to, the cooperation of all Conference members in finding ways to get back to work.

We all share the same responsibility to advance work in the disarmament machinery, as we all face the same threats and challenges. I hope that, despite the worrisome setbacks in 2005, 2006 will be a year of positive developments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ms. Panckhurst (New Zealand): Many delegations have referred to the loss this year of two major opportunities to engage substantively on disarmament and non-proliferation — the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the United Nations summit — at a time when the international community is facing unprecedented challenges and when citizens are looking to their Governments to take action to pursue disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

At the same time, the consensus rule is being misused to prevent even the initiation of informal discussions on those crucial issues in the United Nations body that is meant to address them, the Conference on Disarmament. New Zealand completely supports the need for the consensus rule when substantive negotiations on matters of national security are being held. We are frustrated, however, by its misuse on procedural issues to prevent the initiation of such work.

Against the backdrop of disappointment from the past year, to which most delegations have referred in their statements, there is a need to put forward concrete proposals in order to break the logjam in the Conference on Disarmament. Together with Brazil, Canada, Kenya, Mexico and Sweden, New Zealand put forward one such proposal for initial consideration by Member States at this year's session of the First Committee. After discussion with other delegations, we agreed that it would be best not to submit the proposal formally at this year's session, in order to give more time for delegations to consider the ideas and to allow space and time for the incoming Conference on Disarmament Presidents to develop their plans. In that connection, we very much welcome the thoughts outlined by Poland.

However, New Zealand has been extremely heartened by the amount of interest shown in the initiative we put forward, even by those who opposed it. Among the most encouraging aspects were the rapidity of the response to the initiative, the level of political engagement and the concern shown for the ongoing welfare of the Conference on Disarmament. We hope to maintain that level of interest and engagement over the coming year and would be

delighted to discuss other ideas for getting the Conference back to work after eight sterile years.

Our objective is to see the Conference on Disarmament back in business, real business. And we are looking for assurances to that end from those who continue to frustrate all efforts to settle a work programme and who fail to put forward viable alternative proposals. We have been extremely patient, but that patience is wearing thin.

The First Committee is an ideal forum in which to discuss possible solutions to the Conference on Disarmament deadlock. Indeed, during the general debate, an overwhelming majority of States referred to their frustration over the untenable stagnation at the Conference on Disarmament.

It is in everyone's security interests that substantive negotiations on disarmament and arms control begin. If, as seems to be the case, that is not possible in the Conference on Disarmament at the current time, we will need to look for alternative ways to facilitate the discussion taking place.

Mr. Trezza (Italy): We welcome today's discussion on disarmament machinery, which is connected to the recent process of revitalizing and improving the effectiveness of the working methods of the First Committee. Our first concern should therefore be to ensure compliance with and implementation of resolution 59/95, adopted by consensus last year, the ink on which is still fresh. We commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts to ensure respect for that resolution and for the discipline which you are maintaining in our proceedings.

Italy, as a member of the European Union (EU) and as the holder of its presidency two years ago, when the revitalization process was initiated, recalls the role played by the EU and notes that many EU proposals are reflected in resolution 59/95. We believe that at this stage the First Committee is the main functioning multilateral forum on disarmament and non-proliferation. Safeguarding and strengthening this body is therefore of paramount importance.

The discussion on disarmament machinery, however, exceeds the scope of improving the effectiveness of the First Committee. This is a broader and more complex issue. Is there a need to review the existing machinery? We did not receive any specific mandate on that issue from our leaders at the 2005 world summit. The outcome document (resolution 60/1) contains several recommendations for overhauling existing United Nations structures — for instance, the establishment of a Human Rights Council and a Peacebuilding Commission. But there are no recommendations on disarmament machinery. As a matter of fact, there are no indications whatsoever on weapons of mass destruction disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are among those who believe that the stalemate in which we find ourselves is a symptom of a political divergence on our main priorities. A multilateral compromise at this stage requires further efforts aimed at harmonizing those priorities.

I refer in particular to the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that the task of finding an agreement on a programme of work belongs to the members of the Conference on Disarmament themselves, and that progress depends on the political will of member countries. The call by the Group of Eight leaders last July to resume substantive work at the Conference on Disarmament was a political message at the highest level. The importance of the Conference was reaffirmed in last year's Final Document of the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement. Both those statements are meaningful expressions of political will, and we should build upon them. One of the best ways to foster a more focused political will is to encourage involvement in the Conference on Disarmament at the political level.

We are not ignoring other calls and suggestions made at the Conference on Disarmament, in the First Committee and as part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process to change or adjust the existing machinery. Nor have the more drastic calls for the suspension of some of our activities gone unheard. Although we understand the spirit that animates some of those proposals, we must address them with caution. We must avoid a situation in which the negotiating stalemate also provokes a paralysis in our deliberations and our dialogue. We cannot run the risk of losing the expertise and the relationships that have been established over many years.

Should the stalemate be prolonged, we do not exclude the option of reviewing the functioning of the existing machinery. However, that process should not be improvised but should follow the appropriate institutional procedures.

Mr. Rachmianto (Indonesia): The situation surrounding multilateral disarmament diplomacy and machinery is depressing. I share the view expressed by some preceding speakers that the latest Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons failed to agree on any substantive recommendations. The United Nations summit also failed to address the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation in its outcome document (resolution 60/1). The Conference on Disarmament has remained deadlocked, without a programme of work, for almost nine years.

We know all too well about the situation in Geneva, and we see how the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament seems to have affected other disarmament machinery, including the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to act on pertinent issues such as disarmament and non-proliferation is mainly attributable to the misinterpretation of its rule of consensus. Therefore, we are of the view that there is need to initiate multilateral work to advance the priority issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In that context, the Conference on Disarmament has been called upon, inter alia, to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and to commence negotiation on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament within a specified time frame, including on a nuclear weapons convention. In 1995, by the so-called Shannon mandate, the Conference on Disarmament was requested to start negotiation on a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty in the context of an ad hoc committee. But since the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work has been held hostage for almost nine years, those mandates cannot be carried out.

To overcome that impasse, a proposal initiated by Mexico and a group of other countries to establish ad hoc committees to deal with the four issues to which Ambassador Paul Meyer has just referred is worthy of our attention. It is a good initiative and will allow Member States to contribute substantively on those important issues. It will also afford us the opportunity to move forward with discussion and deliberation that can set the legal, technical and political framework for substantive action on those four issues by the Conference, once it agrees to do so. We have to be open-minded and take a more constructive approach to any initiative that will move us forward, particularly initiatives aimed at revitalizing the disarmament machinery. A sceptical and negative approach will not help our efforts to address nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As we have shown in the framework of the seven-nation ministerial declaration (A/60/415, annex) initiated by Norway, Indonesia will continue to support any initiative designed to jumpstart work in the Conference on Disarmament, including Mexico's initiative. We look forward to working together to further that initiative under future presidencies of the Conference.

Allow me also to touch upon issues related to a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). For quite some time now an overwhelming majority of Member States — if not all — have supported General Assembly resolutions on the convening of SSOD IV. As we are aware, the only consensus document to come out of that process is the Final Document of SSOD I, adopted in 1978 (resolution S-10/2). Since that time, a number of international conferences and General Assembly special sessions on issues of global concern — such as HIV/AIDS and the situation of women — have been convened and took decisions that paved the way for multilateral solutions. Unfortunately, disarmament has yet to find its place in a similar ongoing process. Yet the Final Document of SSOD I clearly stated that nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction remain the highest priority and the principal task of our time.

Some time ago, at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the Secretary-General warned us of rust in the disarmament machinery. New threats to international security have also accelerated the need for concerted multilateral efforts to bridge existing differences on key issues on the disarmament agenda. In our view the convening of SSOD IV is the only viable alternative for our collective efforts. It would offer invaluable opportunities for multilateral deliberation, not only on the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agendas, but also to review the disarmament machinery. In the end, it holds enormous potential to promote the achievement of our disarmament goals. In that regard, a road map has been provided by the consensus resolutions 57/61 and 59/71, which mandated the establishment of an Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda for SSOD IV. Although no consensus was reached in

the Group's 2003 session, its meetings have clarified the issues involved, which will be useful for our future endeavours. It is therefore important to fully utilize the substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on SSOD IV in spring 2006 to promote the return of disarmament and non-proliferation to the international community's agenda.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): We consider the First Committee to be an important part of the multilateral disarmament machinery. Further steps to revitalize this body will therefore continue to be an important objective on our disarmament agenda.

We have already made some progress in our efforts to improve the working methods of the Committee. The general debate this year has been more focused than previously. Our thematic debates have been more interactive and more interesting. Our discussion on the small arms draft resolution last week clearly benefited from a more open-ended exchange of views rather than closed consultations. The contribution by external experts has brought broader perspectives to our deliberations. We welcome the presence of non-governmental organizations; they have a vital role to play in ensuring the awareness and support of civil society and opinion makers.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. The Committee still has to take action on up to 60 draft resolutions and draft decisions. Some of them are repetitive. On the other hand, it is encouraging that more and more sponsors are choosing to biennials or triennials their draft resolutions.

Although overall we have seen some progress in improving the working methods of the First Committee, we are still struggling in other parts of the disarmament machinery. It is high time to set a new course for multilateral arms control diplomacy and forge a new consensus. It is feasible. The cross-regional initiative that Norway took prior to the United Nations summit in September demonstrates that it is possible for countries of various regions and with different arms control perspectives to set aside past differences in order to find common ground.

Let the interest of consensus guide us in our quest to respond to our most profound security challenges: proliferation and the actual use of weapons of mass destruction. We need a multilateral response to that threat. It is imperative for us to redouble our efforts to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work. In that respect, it is very encouraging to listen to the incoming Polish President of the Conference. A commencement of the work in the Conference on Disarmament would be a tremendous contribution to our efforts to consolidate and further strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The United Nations Disarmament Commission remains a great disappointment. While we salute the constructive efforts of the outgoing Chairman of the Commission, we need to ask ourselves whether the Commission is serving its purpose. The Commission is a deliberative body under the General Assembly, but for several years it has been unable to produce any agreed recommendations. If that continues, the Commission will lose much of its credibility. We need to ask critical questions on the Commission's format and consider alternative ways of conducting its business.

We are soon to enter the preparatory phase for the 2006 review conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We have an opportunity to show that multilateralism is working. We must strive to reach agreement on credible measures to ensure that all States parties are complying with their obligations.

We must also build on the progress made on the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention contains clear, legally binding commitments, as well as provisions to ensure compliance.

We need progress on multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Therefore, we reiterate our call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We also urgently need a multilateral and legally binding treaty banning the production of fissile materials. We must start negotiations as soon as possible.

Mr. Rivasseau (France) (*spoke in French*): Like its European Union partners, France too is concerned by the difficulties now facing the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation machinery. Those difficulties have manifested themselves in diverse forums — the Conference on Disarmament and the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the United Nations Disarmament Commission — and in the failure of the recent world summit to agree on disarmament and non-proliferation language for inclusion in the outcome document.

For more than two years now, my country has devoted particular attention to efforts to jumpstart work in the Conference on Disarmament, to increase its level of activity and to enable it to respond to the challenges it faces. In particular, we have suggested that it would be good for the Conference on Disarmament to consider not only its traditional agenda items — such as a fissile material cut-off treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances, among others — but also to try and respond to the challenges of today, challenges that have emerged only recently.

That is why some people have sought to sum up this approach using the terms "new issues" and "out-of-the-box issues". We developed this approach on the sidelines of the Conference on Disarmament in an informal, cross-cutting way, calling upon all groups to make inputs. Today, more than half of the members of the Conference, coming in fairly balanced proportions from various regions, have evinced their interest in this approach and their support in principle.

I was delighted in that context, for example, to hear the representative of Indonesia advocate for a Conference on Disarmament work programme embracing not only disarmament but also non-proliferation. We have also sought in this approach to retain the principle of consensus, for we know that this is an obligation in the Conference on Disarmament.

When we talk about such new approaches, we are not trying merely to identify new issues. We are trying also to come up with new working methods, based on the idea that the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament — and when I say the presidency I have in mind not a single President but all the successive Presidents — must make full use of all the resources already available to them under the Conference rules of procedure.

That is how we can limit what certain delegations are calling — as I see it, improperly — abuse of the principle of consensus. The truth is that there is not so much an abuse of that principle as there is an inadequate and weak use of the President's powers. We consider that through this approach we will be able to respond intelligently to the frustrations voiced, for example, in the statement made earlier by the representative of New Zealand.

Indeed, if we look back, in the past it was the President of the Conference who decided on the work programme. But of course he did not himself decide on the negotiating mandate. So, as we see it, there is some scope that is not being used, but which ought to be.

I should like to say as well that I have heard many very pessimistic remarks. We do not want to be pessimistic; we want to be realistic. Realism tells us that for two years we have been making small advances. They are small, but real. With Kenya, then Mexico providing the impetus, we succeeded two years ago in launching informal talks with a view to negotiating all items on the agenda, including the new issues. Two years ago that remained an informal discussion, but the consensus resolution we adopted two years ago reflected those advances.

This year we succeeded in making further strides, spurred along by a number of Presidents, including those from the Netherlands and Norway, as well as from New Zealand and elsewhere. This time, we managed to begin discussions in formal plenary meeting and in a somewhat more focused way: this time we discussed the principal subjects of interest for the Conference on Disarmament, namely, the fissile material cut-off, nuclear disarmament, negative security guarantees and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We also discussed new issues, on the basis of existing proposals. This year's report of the Conference on Disarmament (A/60/27) also reflects this situation.

We have sown the seeds for two years, and we hope that 2006 will see our first harvest, even if it is a modest one. In that regard, for the past several months, France has been lending its support to the efforts of future Presidents, in particular to those of Poland, which will have the difficult task of being the first to take the reins next year to move the Conference on Disarmament forward. And I would like here to reaffirm my support for the presidency, whose efforts, as I see it, can enable us to move forward in a way that will not harm the interests of the international community as a whole.

In our national capacity — and, I hope, together with the European Union, should it agree on a common position on the Conference on Disarmament, as we would wish — we will be prepared to work together with anyone who, in good faith, wants to make progress along these lines.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to make some somewhat disorganized and

provocative comments to see if we might not make a bit more progress. I think that a number of common denominators have emerged this morning, as have some exceptions to those common denominators. The first, I venture to say, is that we agree that the situation is not acceptable, that it is a bad one for the disarmament machinery as a whole. I do not think a single speaker has defended the current situation.

So the question is, if the machinery is not working, why is it not working? Is it an institutional problem, a problem of political will or a problem of misusing the machinery? I want to stress that last point: I think the real problem lies in the misuse of the machinery, not in the machinery itself. I think we can reach a good degree of convergence. The representative of France made that point in his statement a moment ago. In the Conference on Disarmament, there are possibilities for action by the President or by delegations that have not been fully exploited. We continue to see demonstrably inefficient practices and inertia, and we keep on repeating them. I think that is the first conclusion that emerges from this debate. The status quo does not need to be; there is scope for action within the existing machinery.

This does not mean that the First Committee does not have a greater responsibility than the other parts of the machinery. That lends legitimacy to this morning's discussion to our adoption of appeals and proposals to break through the inertia in the other forums.

That is why I want to draw attention not just to the issues already mentioned: the lack of progress made in the review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the lack of agreement on an agenda for the Commission on Disarmament and of course the very shameful preparatory process for September's meeting of heads of State or Government. I think we also have to look around at other mechanisms that are having problems. We have a Group of Governmental Experts on information and telecommunications that was unable to submit a report.

We have the Group of Governmental Experts on marking and tracing, which forced a late-night consensus now openly questioned by many of us. We have an Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters that is not being fully utilized and whose requests are not being adequately heeded. We have a preparatory process for a fourth special session on disarmament that is experiencing enormous problems. We have an initiative to convene a conference on eliminating nuclear dangers, rightly adopted by consensus in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). All of today's defenders of consensus oppose the holding of such a conference, despite the fact that they approved it in 2000 and it still has not been held. Incidentally, the initiative was introduced by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The problem is a bit more far-reaching than what we now want to see, and, again, the Committee has the obligation to begin to jointly seek alternatives that will enable us to move forward. I believe — and I think it was the representative of Pakistan, Mr. Khan, who proposed this earlier — that it might be worthwhile for the Chairman to hold informal consultations on how to promote this vision of the First Committee as an adjunct to other forums.

In any event, I should like to return to the initiative promoted by six nations, including Mexico, to bring some issues to the attention of the First Committee through the establishment of ad hoc committees. I believe that that is an option that deserves more serious analysis and discussion, and therefore I should like to devote a few minutes to discussing it.

First, I wish to recognize those delegations that have expressed sympathy and support and some — in this case, the delegation of Italy — that have expressed doubts, which I also thank for their comments. I believe what is most serious is a lack of comments; what is most serious is that delegations do not even come to the consultations in which the issues are discussed. I believe that the democratic spirit that inspires this House must be preserved under all circumstances and that we must be able to discuss the merits and problems of any initiative.

In that connection, I thank all those who have been interested and committed and have not necessarily blindly supported the initiative. I believe that it will have to be in sort of stasis, to the extent that we have agreed to give our full support to the Presidents of the Disarmament Commission to make one last attempt. But I want to stress that it is a final attempt, because otherwise I believe we would have to return here with the initiative next year and resolve a matter that has already taken up too much time.

We have already addressed the problem of consensus on other occasions, with a certain spirit of

calm. Here, I merely wish to reiterate that I would respond to the argument that some seek to impose the majority view through the vote by saying that we are very tired of having the minority view imposed on us through consensus. I believe that the majority — the vast majority — has the right to express itself and to promote the items it considers fundamental to its interests, and the First Committee is the only body that will permit that. I believe it is also very important that we resolve these differences between old and new items, between packages and non-packages. I believe that all of those have been the result, quite rightly, of the dialogue process that has begun. In the most recent cases — as the representatives of China and Sweden pointed out — they are complementary visions that we could share at some point. In other words, I believe that if we took stock of what has been discussed today, we could pick out some issues on which there is a degree of consensus — that being understood as the building of a common vision, which will require some time, and not as the impossibility of even discussing the problems besetting us because one or two countries are opposed to it.

Therefore, I reiterate my request that this dialogue move forward. The Chairman may have some substantive role in this process. Perhaps it need not be reflected in written form at this point, but at least let the First Committee — as the Committee that has pursued the revitalization effort — deal with substantive issues.

Mr. Calderón (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I express to you, Mr. Chairman, my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you leading the Committee's discussions. We are certain that your wisdom and tact will ensure the success of our work. I should also like, through you, to express to the Pakistan delegation Peru's grief, sympathy and solidarity with regard to the people of Pakistan, who have endured a terrible natural disaster. We trust that the will to live and a fighting spirit will restore to the victims' families the peace that they deserve.

We are discussing the theme "Disarmament machinery". The first realization emerging from this discussion is that that machinery is either rusted or broken. Several previous speakers have made a pessimistic diagnosis of the situation. Naturally, such a diagnosis is a cause for concern.

The fact that the disarmament machinery is in a state of paralysis is not in itself unexpected. Rather, it is the result of a fundamental change in the international situation. When the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was opened for signature, five Powers were specifically addressed in it. Now we have a new and different situation. In the interval, covert proliferation has occurred, and that naturally has a regional impact. We could say the same with regard to biological weapons. If we recall what happened in the autumn of 2001, after the reprehensible attacks on the towers in New York, the suspicious dissemination of anthrax reflected know-how and mechanisms to spread it and cause harm. And we could continue to talk about other areas in which the arms race, far from stopping, is paradoxically maintaining a brisk pace.

Although it is true that the two major Powers have made bilateral efforts at nuclear arms reduction, we lack transparent international control of the fissionable materials used to produce such weapons.

Beyond that, there are new and extremely dangerous threats, such as terrorism linked to the proliferation of radiological and other types of weapons. In other words, the manner in which the member States of the international community perceive security is changing, because the scenario is a dangerous one. That is reflected in States' interests and priorities and, naturally, in the problems facing them in their attempts to negotiate disarmament or arms control issues.

That is why no one can be pleased that paralysis is affecting both the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. It is to be hoped that results will be achieved in 2006 with respect to beginning negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. The six-country initiative is not only timely but understandable. We cannot stand by idly and let time pass given the changing security conditions, the increasing problems and the continued scourge of the arms race.

Peru repeatedly has undertaken commitments in favour of peace and of the maintenance of international peace and security by signing all treaties related to arms and disarmament. We believe that it is high time for the international community to address specific disarmament agenda items in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Such issues may not

necessarily involve disarmament directly, but, at the very least, a positive signal needs to be sent to the international community in that regard. It is worth our while to make further efforts next year. Let us not forget that time is passing quickly.

The Chairman: I shall now call on delegations wishing to introduce draft resolutions.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): I am taking the floor to introduce two draft resolutions on regional disarmament and on conventional arms control, contained, respectively, in documents A/C.1/60/L.23 and A/C.1/60/L.44.

First, I turn to the draft resolution on regional disarmament, which I am presenting on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Nepal, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Turkey and on behalf of my own delegation, Pakistan.

In order to ensure global security and disarmament, it is imperative to pursue efforts at both the international and regional levels. International disarmament measures are unquestionably of vital importance. However, security and disarmament can be promoted most effectively at the regional level. To direct our endeavour, we have the requisite guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993.

Regional measures are the building blocks for international security. These guidelines remain relevant in the present day for the promotion of regional disarmament in both the conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is now quite evident that in most of the areas of tension and potential conflict — the Middle East, South Asia, North-East Asia and Central Asia — the regional approach could offer a most effective basis to promote disarmament and thus enhance security. The draft resolution notes the recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. It expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament enhance the security of all States.

These endeavours take into account the specific characteristics of each region and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments. In order to achieve those objectives, we need sustained efforts. The draft resolution stresses that point. It also affirms that regional approaches to disarmament complement one another, calls on States to conclude agreements wherever possible, welcomes the initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels, and supports and encourages confidence-building measures.

We believe that the adoption of this draft resolution should encourage the countries concerned to step up endeavours aimed at regional disarmament. Its adoption should also help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors and my delegation hope that, as in the past year, the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

I should now like to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/60/L.44, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Liberia, Nepal, Peru, Spain, Ukraine and on behalf of my own delegation.

This draft resolution aims to promote disarmament endeavours in the area of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. Though evidently important, this issue has not received the attention and support it deserves. We need a sharp focus on conventional balance and arms control.

In its preamble, the draft resolution outlines several principles and precepts. These include the crucial role of arms control in peace and security; the threats to peace in the post-cold-war era arising mainly among States located in the same region or subregion; the preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments contributing to peace and stability; the objective of agreements to strengthen peace and security at the lowest possible level of disarmament and military forces; the special responsibility of the militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities in promoting such agreements for regional peace and security; and the objective to prevent the possibility of military attack launched by surprise and to avoid aggression.

The preamble of the draft resolution also notes with particular interest the initiatives taken in various regions, including a number of Latin American countries, the proposals for conventional arms control in South Asia, and recognizes the relevance and value of the Conventional Armed Forces (CFE) Treaty in

Europe, which is described as a cornerstone of European security.

The operative part of the draft resolution, while deciding to give urgent consideration to the issue of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels, requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider formulating principles that can serve as the framework for regional agreements. It also requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and submit a report to the General Assembly at its next session.

The sponsors look forward to the Committee's strong support for this draft resolution.

Mr. Calderón (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to introduce the draft resolution on the report of the Conference on Disarmament, contained in document A/C.1/60/L.20. This draft resolution, in its structure and content, builds on resolutions adopted in past years on the same item, which, as representatives will recall, were adopted without a vote.

The draft resolution takes note of the work done by the Conference on Disarmament in 2005, in particular recognizing the importance of the presence of a number of ministers for foreign affairs which reflected the political support of their countries for the work of the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

In its operative part the draft resolution further contains an indication on how to move forward in 2006. In particular, let me cite paragraph 4, which welcomes the decision of the Conference to request its current President and the incoming President to conduct consultations during the intersessional period and, if possible, to make recommendations taking into account all relevant proposals, including those submitted as documents of the Conference, views presented and discussions held, and to endeavour to keep the membership of the Conference informed of their consultations.

Paragraph 5 requests States members of the Conference to cooperate with the current President and successive Presidents in their efforts to guide the Conference to the early commencement of substantive work in its 2006 session.

In introducing the draft resolution, I would like to emphasize the determination of the presidency to pursue consultations, jointly with the incoming President of the Conference, Ambassador Rapacki of Poland, with a view to finding ways to rally consensus among Conference members, so that this unique multilateral negotiating forum can commence its work without any further delay.

Before concluding, Sir, I would like to express the appreciation of the Conference presidency for the cooperation and spirit of flexibility shown by all delegations in Geneva, which made possible the timely adoption of the final report of the Conference on Disarmament (A/60/27). I am certain that in 2006, the shared determination of all States will make it possible for the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its mandate: to negotiate. It is my wish that draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.20 will be adopted without a vote.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me, on behalf of the 33 countries members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.21, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean".

The countries members of the Group would like to place on record our full satisfaction with the work done by the Lima Centre, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/132). Thus, we would like publicly to congratulate the Director of the Regional Centre, Mr. Péricles Gasparini Alves, and his team on their outstanding leadership, commitment, dedication and enthusiasm, which have made the Centre an example to be emulated.

At the same time, we cannot fail to express our thanks to those countries that have given financial backing to the Lima Centre. Without their help it would not have been possible to launch important initiatives concerning arms destruction, management of arsenals, training courses, guidance on the submission of reports and the devising of methodologies, to mention only a few.

The countries members of our Group acknowledge that the Lima Centre can cooperate and help other regional centres also to have efficient management and attain the same level of performance. At the same time, however, we strongly urge the Centre remain completely independent; we will closely follow any discussions or initiatives in that regard.

To sum up, as we see it, the draft resolution that we are putting forward for consideration would recognize the work of the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and would encourage it to continue its work. Our countries enthusiastically promote its endeavours. We hope that the rest of the international community will continue supporting us in our efforts to attain our region's goals for peace, disarmament and development. It is our desire that, as with similar texts in past years, the draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

The Chairman: Tomorrow, in accordance with our programme of work, we shall proceed with an informal interactive exchange with the President of the Conference on Disarmament and the Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The Committee will also have time tomorrow to discuss the follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its previous session, together with the presentation of reports. If time permits, delegations may also continue introducing draft resolutions and decisions.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.